

Mr Michael Harvey - Botanic Gardens and State Herbarium's tenth Director commences

Media Release

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A new leader has taken the reigns at one of South Australia's most iconic institutions today, with Mr Michael Harvey commencing as the tenth Director of the Botanic Gardens and State Herbarium.

The respected public institution, established in 1857 when Adelaide Botanic Garden was opened to the public, plays a pivotal role in managing and maintaining extensive botanic garden estates and scientific collections housed at the State Herbarium and SA Seed Conservation Centre.

Michael brings 20 years of experience in the museum, cultural and science sector to the role, with a particular focus on museums of science and natural history.

Michael has also held leadership positions across a number of other high profile organisations including the Australian Museum and the Australian National Maritime Museum in Sydney, and at the British Council and the Natural History Museum in the United Kingdom.

Most recently, Michael worked as Assistant Director and Chief Experience Officer at the Australian National Maritime Museum, a role that blended history and maritime archaeology, Navy and defence studies, ocean science and sustainability, and First Nations and migration programs.

Board of the Botanic Gardens and State Herbarium Presiding Member Ms Judy Potter said Michael's past history is strongly linked to the natural history of our world, and brings with him a deep understanding of the intrinsic connections between nature, people and culture.

"Michael has demonstrated great leadership across a number of high profile organisations in Australia, and abroad," Ms Potter said.

"The Board is very excited about Michael's commencement as Director. His wide-ranging experience, his leadership within cultural and scientific institutions, combined with his expertise in building partnerships with community sectors, will position us to effectively serve the South Australian community while contributing to government priorities."

Mr Harvey, who commences his tenure working from home due to the recent outbreak of COVID-19 in Sydney, said he is honoured to commence the Director role, albeit, not in the fashion that he had expected.

"COVID-19 has thrown the proverbial 'spanner in the works', but I was lucky enough to have visited a month or so ago and met with many of the staff," Mr Harvey said.

"It is clear the institution is filled with passionate, expert staff and volunteers. I now look forward to engaging more widely with stakeholders and supporters who truly believe in and value the incredible work of the institution."

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"My first love is natural history—and it is very exciting for me to be coming back to a natural science institution—especially one as well respected as this.

"The mix of scientific endeavour and public science engagement, which I experienced at the Australian Museum and the Natural History Museum, is really what I'm most excited about here."

The Botanic Gardens and State Herbarium plays an important role in lifelong learning, community health and wellbeing, engagement and providing enjoyment to South Australians and visitors from interstate and overseas who experience the gardens.

The institution undertakes important scientific and horticultural research within these facilities directly, and in partnership with other like-minded institutions and environment agencies in Australia and internationally.

Michael's initial focus in the early weeks will be to build connections through partnership programs and events, and to enable development of a new strategic plan for the institution.

"In addition to getting to know and working with the Board and staff, I am also looking forward to getting to know South Australia, and its people, a little better," Mr Harvey said.

"With the institution's Strategic Plan due for renewal in 2022, I'm keen to collaborate broadly in developing a plan that will respect the institution's rich legacy, while enabling new opportunities for growing visitation, innovation, commercial activation and scientific excellence."

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